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TEXT OF TELEGRAM 80SEUL 007480

ADP764

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 SY-05 IO-14 SYE-00 HA-05 /074 W
-----023028 110910Z /20

O 110840Z JUN 80
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6982
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//BJ-IS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
SA CINCUNC KS

SEUL 07480

E.O. 12065: GDS 6/11/86 (CLARK, WILLIAM) OR-P
TAGS: PINS, KS
SUBJECT: ROK AUTHORITIES TRY TO STIFFLE RUMOR MILL

1. [REDACTED]
2. ROKG AUTHORITIES CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TO DIMINISH THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC RESTIVENESS. WHILE PROJECTING AN AIR OF GENEROSITY TOWARDS THE SUFFERERS IN KWANGJU, THEY MAKE NO SECRET OF THEIR RELENTLESSNESS IN SEEKING OUT AND DEALING WITH MALCONTENTS AND AGITATORS. PRIMARY CONCERN SEEMS TO BE FOCUSED ON THE PROBLEM OF RUMORS, AND THE ATTACK ON THE RUMOR MILL IS VIGOROUS AND MULTI-PRONGED.
3. THERE IS AT LEAST SOME ATTEMPT TO DEFUSE RUMORS BY ASSUMING AN AIR OF OFFICIAL CANDOR IN DEALING WITH HARD STORIES. MARTIAL LAW COMMAND ON JUNE 5, FOR EXAMPLE, ANNOUNCED IT WAS RAISING THE OFFICIAL DEATH TOLL FOR KWANGJU FROM 144 TO 148 AND WAS REDUCING FROM 32 TO 3 THE NUMBER OF THOSE DEATHS ATTRIBUTED TO TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS. CENSORSHIP, HOWEVER, IS SO SEVERE THAT OFFICIAL CANDOR IS

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AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT IMAGE TO PROJECT.

4. THERE ARE DAILY WARNINGS OF SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR RUMORMONGERS. THESE ARE SUPPORTED BY OBJECT LESSONS, SUCH AS THE ARREST JUNE 9, FOR SPREADING "HARMFUL STORIES", OF EIGHT FAIRLY SENIOR JOURNALISTS (SEVEN FROM KYUNGHYANG/MUNHWA CO., ONE FROM DONGA ILBO). COUPLED WITH THIS IS THE PERIODIC PUBLICATION OF "RUMORS" WHICH ARE LABELED AS "FALSE" AND THE SPREADING OF WHICH IS PUNISHABLE. THE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE 9003668 IS/FPC/CDR TRB Date 9/13/93	
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FOIA Exemptions	
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MR Cases Only:	
EU Citations	
TS authority to:	
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EIGHT ARRESTED JOURNALISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE ACCUSED OF SPREADING THE TALE THAT THE ARMY TROOPS IN KWANGJU HAD BEEN FED HALLUCINOGENS (THIS RELATES APPARENTLY TO THE WIDESPREAD RUMOR THAT TROOPS IN THE CITY WERE EITHER DRUNK OR DRUGGED). THE OTHER SIX RUMORS WHICH THE PRESS ATTRIBUTED TO THE ARRESTED MEN WERE ALL COINED IN THE PHRASEOLOGY FAVORED BY NORTH KOREAN RADIO, AND MAY HAVE CONSTITUTED A WARNING TO THE GROWING NUMBER OF CITIZENS WHOSE THIRST FOR NEWS HAS DRIVEN THEM TO BEGIN TUNING IN PYONGYANG.

5. FINALLY, ONE RUMOR, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE PREPARING TO TAKE TO THE STREETS, APPARENTLY HAS BEEN AT LEAST PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DAILY DISPLAYS OF POLICE/MILITARY STRENGTH IN DOWNTOWN SEOUL. AS THAT RUMOR, WHICH CIRCULATED ALMOST DAILY DURING THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE RETAKING OF KWANGJU, HAS SUBSIDED BOTH IN FREQUENCY, AND CREDIBILITY, THE SIZE AND NUMBER OF POLICE GUARDS AT INTERSECTIONS, ETC. HAS DIMINISHED. PERSONNEL CARRIERS HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM IN FRONT OF MOST PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND TROOPS REPLACED WITH POLICE IN REGULAR UNIFORM. TROOPS CONTINUE TO GUARD MEDIA BUILDINGS. POLICE BUSES WITH COMBAT POLICE REMAIN PARKED AT OR NEAR FAVORITE RALLYING POINTS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS -- THE CULTURAL CENTER, SEOUL

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STATION, ETC. -- BUT HAVE CEASED TO BE A COMMON SIGHT PARKED OR CRUISING IN CONVOY ON CITY STREETS. GLEYSTEN

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